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the universes are a god's dreams,

by antagonists

Summary

The Black Market is abound with illegally-obtained Fragments, Chrom competes with Plegia Co., and Robin can't put shirts on properly.

AU in which FE:A is set in cyberpunk and nobody is straight.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

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Deep in the alleyways of Neo-Ylisse, harsh lights glints off of sharp steel, off jaundice. When the metal is pulled away from deep precision cuts in cold skin, it gleams and drips crimson, clatters against flat surfaces. A gloved hand prods at the slit in the flesh before plunging into the gory crevice with a disturbing squelch.

“Obedience Frags are high on demand, huh?” a voice calls from the corner. The pale man, though his smile would be called childish, holds a certain professional chill in his gait. “Poor Tharja, working day and night with the corpses.”

The used scalpel shudders in its new position buried in the wall. Tharja scowls beneath her mask, gesturing, with her clean hand, a cutthroat motion against her neck. She seems to stand out oddly amidst all the sterile white of the lab. Silently, she continues to dig around in the body, searching for an inorganic smoothness. Her deliberate refusal to verbally respond marks her exhaustion. They've been busy, after all, inspecting all the bodies that come in for any useful Fragments. Obedience ones, in particular, are wildly sought after. The more potent, the better.

Henry, who'd been a mere fingerbreadth away from death, laughs.

"Need me to help with anything?" he asks sweetly, rather inappropriate in the unsettling quiet.

With a triumphant flourish, Tharja yanks out a small orb from the corpse's neck, spraying old blood everywhere. The Fragment glows orange, and its mysterious contents swirl about in a counter-clockwise direction. Upon closer inspection, one would see the *S-OBD-7633-0026* written in bold black letters along the titanium output port. Henry shrieks gleefully at the sudden appearance of blood near his shoes. He then takes the small box Tharja hands him with a gracious curtsy, moves to kiss her bloody fingers, and reconsiders when she pops her bubblegum threateningly.

"Get your sorry ass out of here." She pulls off her latex gloves with a glower. "And don't forget about doing the delivery properly this time."

Removing the mask and the smock she wears to ward off any stray blood, she snorts at the sight of Henry peering into the oblong rupture on the dead body's nape. It is the corpse of a slave, and at this point has no further purpose expect to become a voodoo doll. He prods at the body again, squinting to make out the outline of the spine.

Tharja leaves the room with a huff, leaving Henry to call down someone to clean the mess she's made. Afterwards, he traipses out of the building with an inconspicuous spring in his step. He peeks into the box on multiple occasions, cooing at the Fragment nestled in its crude packaging. The tech-bits inside the orb glitter at him ominously, as if trying to convince him that it would be a good idea to insert the orb into one of his own ports.

Nope, he imagines telling the Fragment chirpily, *I like being in control of my Fragments, thank you very* much, and manages to proceed through the delivery without any mishaps this time.

"Ah-ah, don't forget the payment," he chides with a misleading smile when the patron attempts to shut the door on him. They hand the money over to him grudgingly, with a frown that grows deeper the longer he verifies the money on the doorstep. No doubt they're unsettled by his presence, but perhaps even more so from the knife he has hidden in his sleeve. His arm is

strategically angled so that the light from inside glints off the deadly blade.

Once he's made certain he's been paid the right amount, he waves goodbye to a closed door and skips off into the crowded city once more. It swallows him easily, as if he is a single star amidst an entire galaxy.

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Robin had awoken to the sight of towering skyscrapers, neon lights, the trails of light that hovercrafts leave behind. Covering him in shadow had stood two people, obviously in one of the elite classes from the way their eyes glowed with new technology. It's strange, how familiar and foreign they had felt, as if he'd woken up from a very vivid and confusing dream. After a scuffle with a gang of some sorts (after Chrom, of course), he'd been praised for his tactical skills. Now, he's being led through the main company factory, gaping at the machines and development sectors. Behind him, a rather stern guard keeps note of his every movement.

Robin shuffles a bit closer to Lissa.

"Our company is partially responsible for the manufacturing of Fragments," Chrom tells him as they walk. "We have divisions dedicated towards production, and others more geared towards tracking down illegally-made Fragments and destroying the sources. There's been a recent uprising of corrupt technology, so we've been busy with purging the city. There's also a good amount of competition between different companies as well, so we're also seeking to improve our products as much as possible while delivering a variety of safe and flexible items to our customers.

"Additionally, the members on our teams are also equipped with Fragments beneficial towards their position, which also have tracking software programmed into them, should anyone try to kidnap them for ransoms. We do take cautions in ensuring that whatever the teams are given have been tested thoroughly for any possible programming errors or malfunctions.

"I, myself," Chrom pauses, "have an Authority Fragment equipped. It comes in useful when the teams panic and they need someone to listen to. But really, the Fragments are only as strong as the individual, since they only influence the qualities you already have, not magically improve or endow."

"Milord, are you sure that it is wise to—"

“Yes, Frederick the Wary,” Chrom says for the umpteenth time. “I swear this is not a lapse in judgment. You’ve seen how Robin can handled the ambush back there! With his powers, we’ll be able to get some serious weeding done, no doubt.”

“Then I suggest we check that he has no Spying or other unethical Fragments. It would not do if you let your trust get the better of you.” The guard turns to Robin with a warning glint in his eyes. “You do not have any objections, correct?”

“None,” Robin acquiesces smoothly. Since quality Fragments must be in physical contact with the spinal cord, he must either have one of those, or none at all. Frederick had checked his back upon meeting him, only to withdraw an empty hand. He is not quite sure of his identity, but can be relatively confident in that he can’t cause too much harm. After all, he can’t even remember much outside his own name; a docile amnesiac wouldn’t be must of a threat to an experienced guard like Frederick anyways.

The results of the scan show up negative, though he’s still a bit mortified that he had to stand naked in front of half the lab assistants. Frederick still gives him suspicious glares every now and then, but at least he’s cleared of being a spy or any accomplice of a rival company. When Lissa hands him a new shirt to go with his borrowed pants, he thanks her and struggles to stick his arms through the appropriate holes.

In the middle of his clumsy endeavor, however, he gets stopped as Chrom gently runs a calloused finger down his spine. Squeaking, Robin freezes, unsuccessful in his attempts to look through the tiny openings in the fabric to see what Chrom is doing. Right now, he must be making panicked noises from behind the thick cotton, but he isn’t so sure whether that’s him, or Lissa laughing at him.

“You’re right,” Chrom hums thoughtfully. “No Fragments at all. I was almost sure that you had something like a Psyche or Judgment Fragment equipped, but I guess that’s all really just your own work.” He steps back to allow Robin to pull the shirt down, rubbing his chin.

“The reports showed he only has one port, too,” Lissa points out. “I’ve never seen one like it before, though. It wouldn’t fit with any of the designs that we make, or any of the other input ports that we’ve seen from other makes.”

As the siblings discuss their findings, Robin turns his head towards the spacious area of the upper lab level. The one-way windows, which span the entirety of wall-space, provide a marvelous view of Neo-Ylisse below. He can see the airspace filled with glowing aerodynamic machines, floating condos, and network signal balloons. He would have been able to zone out and simply stare at the enthralling sights of cyberspace, but some machine starts beeping loudly, and Robin witnesses

Frederick rolling his eyes when he jumps at the sound.

Some poor, gangly teen is pushed away from the fussing group, and looking lost, he joins Robin in watching from the distance.

“What did you do?” Robin asks, clearly unaware of what is happening.

Munching furiously on a handful of potato chips, the boy laughs nervously. “I, uh, tried cloning some potato chips. The machine won’t stop making them though. They won’t let me near the machine now since they know I’ll just keep on cloning them.”

“I see,” Robin says, a bit confused.

“Want some?” The boy raises his ultimate-sized bag of chips. When Robin nods, he pours a hearty amount into his cupped hands. “I’m Stahl, by the way. Technically I work with Frederick and Lonqu for security rounds, but it’s always fun tinkering around with a little technology now and then.”

Until the other people are able to stop the machine from producing such an unhealthy amount of potato chips, Robin and Stahl talk about random things. Robin finds that he is actually fairly well-versed in the logistics of both Fragment production and distribution, much to Frederick’s surprise, and is eager to offer his help to the development of products. He introduces himself to the rest of the group, exchanging handshakes and bows. Some readily accept his help, others, though, are less than welcoming.

“I will not associate myself with a man who cannot tell the difference between the front and back of a shirt,” the woman called Maribelle sniffs delicately, and Robin looks down to see his shirt is on backwards.

Chrom laughs while Frederick coughs politely. Robin burns a brilliant shade of red.

“I can put my shirt on properly,” Robin argues, lifting the fabric to turn the garment around. He must have terrible luck with shirts, however. His arms get stuck in the sleeves, and in the middle of trying to untangle them, he loses his balance and falls into the rather large pile of potato chips.

“It’s okay, Robin,” the intern Ricken says. “I didn’t know the difference between my left and right shoes until Maribelle pointed it out, either."

“Those chips are mine!” Stahl protests.

The group bursts into noise once more. Robin finally manages to fix his shirt, and Chrom promises to buy him better ones.

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Fragments: technological innovations that were first invented by Naga Inc., a company which was destroyed in a mysterious explosion. Survivors of the incident were killed during their stay at the hospital. The products, Fragments, are now manufactured by other companies that seek to carry on the legacy of improved traits and possible superhuman qualities.

These Fragments generally come in orbs ½ cm in diameter at largest with a small, generally titanium, protrusion (the output port) that can differ in shape depending on the manufacturer. Fragments are usually attached to input ports that are implanted in children at a very young age. These ports are placed down the length of an individual’s spinal cord, from the lumbar vertebrae to the Atlas vertebrae, though it is very risky to have a Fragment equipped so close to the brain.

The purpose of Fragments is to enhance certain aspects of one’s qualities. There are also Fragments used for medicinal purposes, such as the off-the-counter Calm Fragment, which may provide relief to individuals suffering from anger management. Potency of Fragments depend on the product, the manufacturer, and whether it was given as a prescription or a temporary solution. They are not used to cure diseases of any kind, or to fix any illnesses that one may have.

Fragments are composed of a bio-friendly glass container and tech-bits suspended in hyper-transmitter liquid that allows for rapid communication between the bits and the nerves. Fatalities consist of programming errors in the tech-bits, which result in irregular behavior, decrease in proper brain functions and activity, and in extreme cases, brain death. Though manufacturers have put in effort to prevent these malfunctions from occurring, they are far from perfecting the technology that allows body-brain enhancement.

There are certain groups who produce unpolished, customized Fragments that are meant not to assist, but to completely enhance brain and bodily functions to achieve superhuman status. Certain companies have also attempted to perfect these projects, but have ended in failure for all their endeavors. In 3004 AD, the government passed the Anti-Superhuman Clause, declaring that any

form of activity that served to create artificial forms of extreme body-brain enhancement would be considered illegal.

Companies such as Exalt Co. are responsible not only for producing high-quality Fragments, but also in observing suspicious activity as well as capturing any individual/groups that may be involved in the production of superhuman Fragments, also known as God Fragments, or in the Black Market Trade. The Fragment Trade is a practice more common with Plegia Co., a company well known for its underhanded methods, and individual practitioners seeking personal fame and wealth.

As of today, there are no known Fragments that have been crafted successfully to attain God-status.

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End Notes

this is a completely different style from what i normally write in, so i apologize for the mess

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